

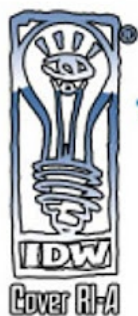


Cover A
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THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT



KUP



THE TRANSFORMERS

SPOTLIGHT



KUP



Cover B
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THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT



Alex Milne

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KUP



THE TRANSFORMERS

SPOTLIGHT



KUP



He's faught Igyaks, fended off the Shrike-bats of Dromedon and remembers the day they inverted polarities, but how will the grizzled Autobot veteran Kup fare against this latest challenge—Zombots? Stranded on a desolate planet, alone and approaching shutdown fast, Kup fights off the hordes of evil and approaching insanity, but is everything as it seems...?



THE TRANSFORMERS: SPOTLIGHT KUP

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY: NICK ROCHE

COLORS BY: ANDREW ELDER

COVER ART BY: NICK ROCHE

& ALEX MILNE

LETTERS BY: ROBBIE ROBBINS

EDITS BY: CHRIS RYALL & DAN TAYLOR



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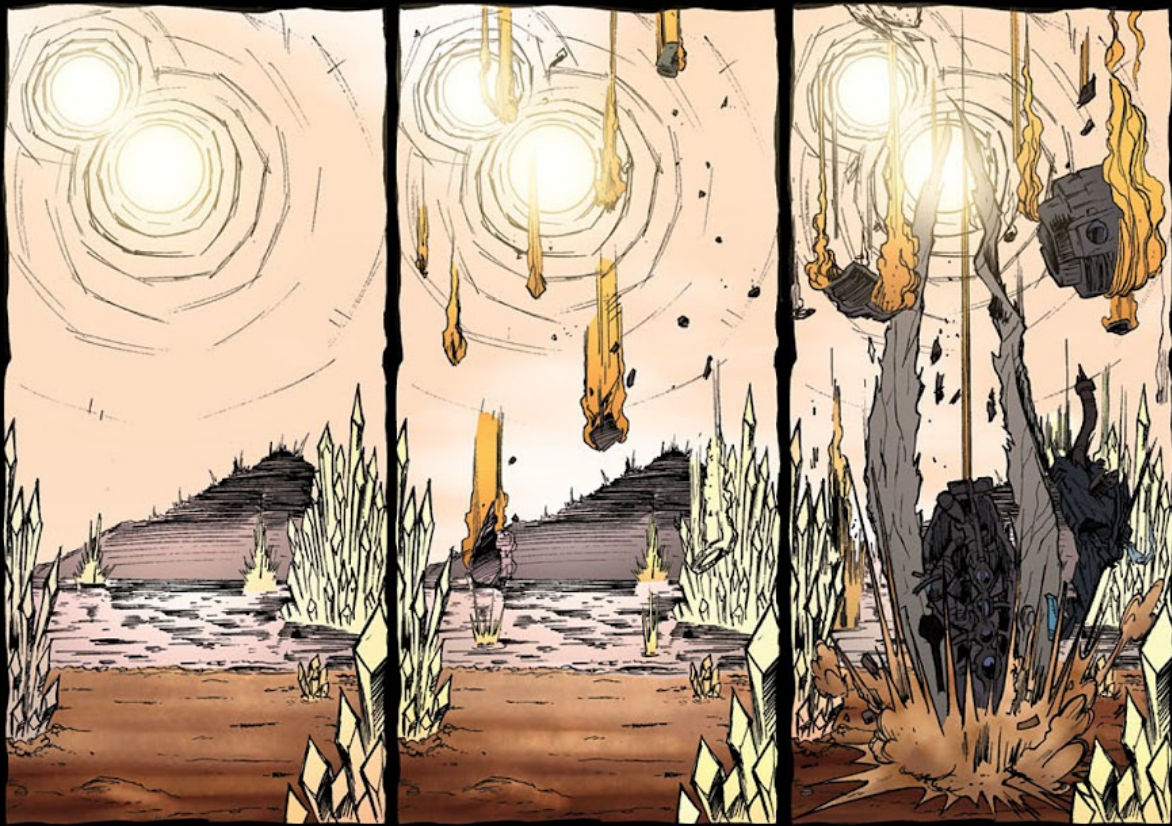
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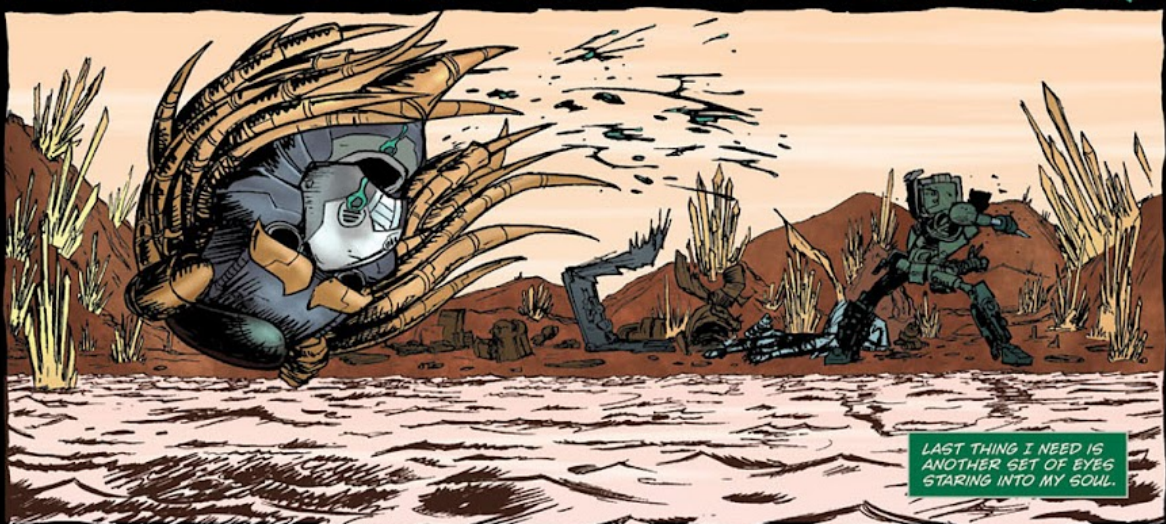
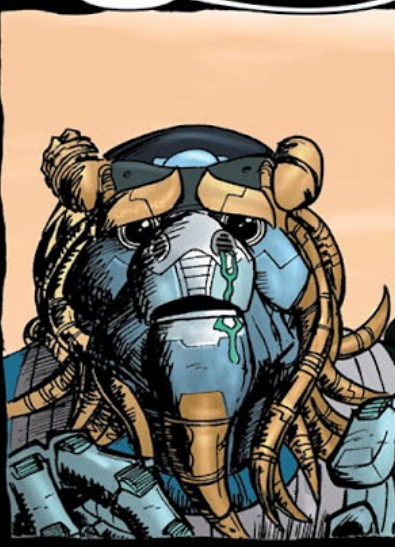
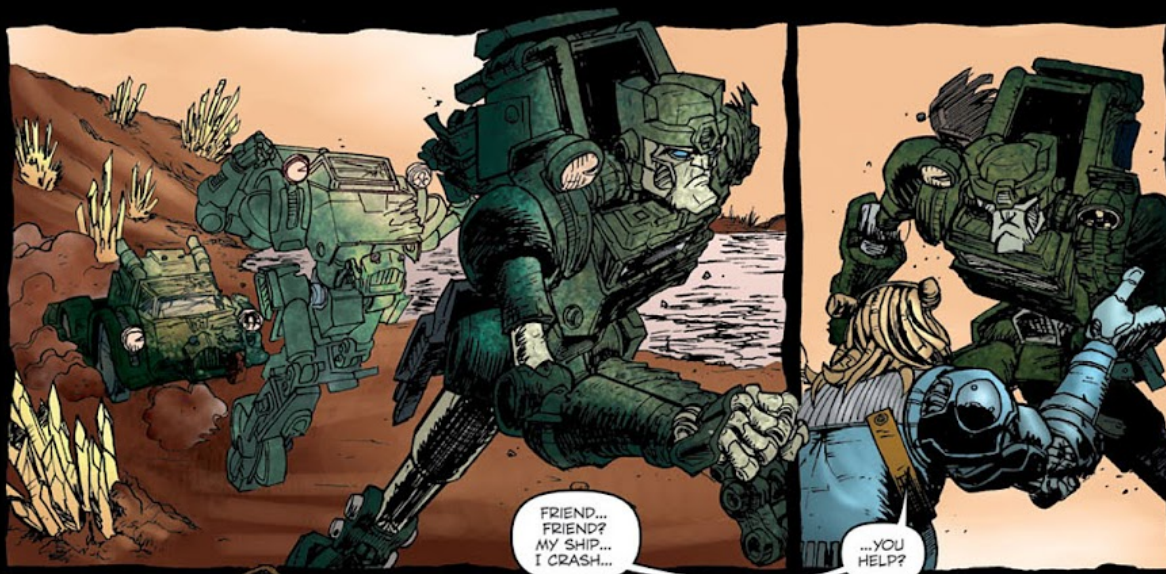
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ANOTHER DAY IN THIS PLACE. ANOTHER DAY IN THE LAND OF TWO SUNS. ANOTHER DAY AMONG THE CRYSTALS—MY CRYSTALS, SWEETLY SINGIN' THEIR TUNE TO ME.

CAN YOU HEAR IT? MAYBE YOU CAN'T. MAYBE THE MUSIC'S PRIVATE, MEANT FOR ME AND ME ONLY.

YEAH, I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT.

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE? I CAN'T ANSWER THAT. I MEAN—I'D LIKE TO, I REALLY WOULD. I'VE TRIED TO FIGGER IT OUT, BUT MY BRAIN JUST WANTS ME TO LISTEN TO THE CRYSTALS. AND I'M HAPPY WITH THAT.

'SIDES, ANY SENSE A' TIME I HAD DIED WHEN OUR HOPE OF RESCUE DID.

I'M OLD. REAL OLD. USETA BE THAT MY AGE WAS AGAINST ME, BUT NOT SINCE I GOT HERE. NOT SINCE OUR SHIP CRASHED N' SPLASHED IN THE SAME LAKE I TOSSED THAT INTERLOPER'S HEAD INTO...

WHO WAS HE? WHAT WAS HE? ONE A' THEM? MAYBE THEY'VE CHANGED APPEARANCE? OR MAYBE IT'S SOME NEW FIEND SENT TO TEST ME?

NAW. GOTTA BE ONE A' THEM. HAS TO BE.

THEY NEVER USED TO COME OUT IN THE DAY, THOUGH, WHEN THE SUNS ARE OUT, AND THE CRYSTALS ARE SINGIN' THEIR LOUDEST.

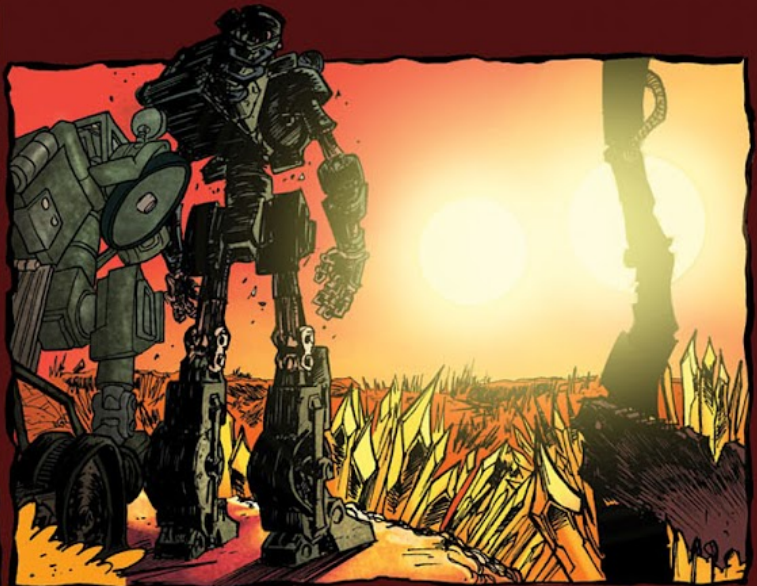
NEVER USED TO SHOW WHEN I WAS ONLINE BEFORE... ONLY WHEN I DRIFTED... ONLY AT NIGHT...

IT'S NOT NIGHTTIME NOW. SO ENJOY THE LIGHT. ENJOY THE WAY THE SUNS' RAYS PLAY ON THE SKIN A' THESE LIVIN' GEMSTONES.

THE FEAR AND PARANOIA'S JUST LIFTIN' RIGHT OFFA' ME.

IT'S THIS PLACE. THIS WORLD. THESE CRYSTALS. I KNOW LIFE IS WORTH LIVIN' COS' THEY SING ME SO.

AND ONE DAY SOON, THEY'RE GONNA SING ME A SOLUTION TO ALL MY PROBLEMS.





LEARNED THE HARD WAY TO RESPECT THESE BEAUTIES, THOUGH. YEP, BACK WHEN WE FIRST GOT HERE, BACK WHEN FINDIN' OUR WAY HOME SEEMED LIKE AN OPTION, WE DECIDED TO BUILD US A TRANSMITTER.

DROGGED A WHOLE LOTTA JUNK UP FROM OUR CRASHED SHIP, GOT SET UP ON THIS SPOT, AND STARTED TO COBBLE TOGETHER SOMETHING TO SEND A SIGNAL.

THING IS, THOUGH, OUR LITTLE HOMEMADE GENERATOR WENT INTO MELTDOWN, AND, WELL...



...THAT'S HOW WE NEARLY LOST OL' OUTBACK.



THAT'S RIGHT, BUDDY, SUNS'RE DROPPIN' FAST NOW.



HA! YEAH, GOOD ONE, BUDDY!

THAT SHOWED ME TO RESPECT THE CRYSTALS' POWER, I CAN TELL YA. TAUGHT ME THE HARD WAY THAT BLASTERS AN' ENERGY WEAPONS JUST CAN'T BE USED IN THIS PLACE...

...NO MATTER WHAT THIS PLANET THROWS AT ME COME NIGHTTIME.



HE'S A GOOD KID, THAT OUTBACK. ALWAYS WILLING TO GIVE A HAND.



GOOD OL' OUTBACK.

NIGHTFALL.

INITIATING SHUTDOWN.

NO STIMULATION FOR MY OLD SPARK,
NO MUSIC, NO DISTANCE LEFT TO RUN.

I NEED REST. I LET IT HAPPEN.

SYSTEM OFFLINE.

AND LIKE EVERY
OTHER NIGHT,
JUST AS I'M
ABOUT TO GO
UNDER, THAT'S
WHEN IT STARTS...

KUUP...
KUUUP...
KUUUUP!

**THERE'S A GHOST
IN THE ROOM...**

SYSTEM BACK ONLINE.

ONE OF US MUST BE DEAD.

BUT I AIN'T SURE WHO.

WE'RE
COMING TO
GET YOU,
KUP!

DO YOU
HEAR ME?

STAY RIGHT THERE.

WE'RE
COMING
FOR YOU.

YOU'RE NOT REAL,
YOU'RE NOT REAL,
YOU'RE NOT REAL,
YOU'RE NOT REAL...

...YOU'RE NOT REAL,
YOU'RE NOT REAL,
YOU'RE NOT—

KUP.

KUP.

KUP

KUP.

NO.

KUP.

KUP.

**I DON'T BELIEVE
IN GHOSTS...**

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

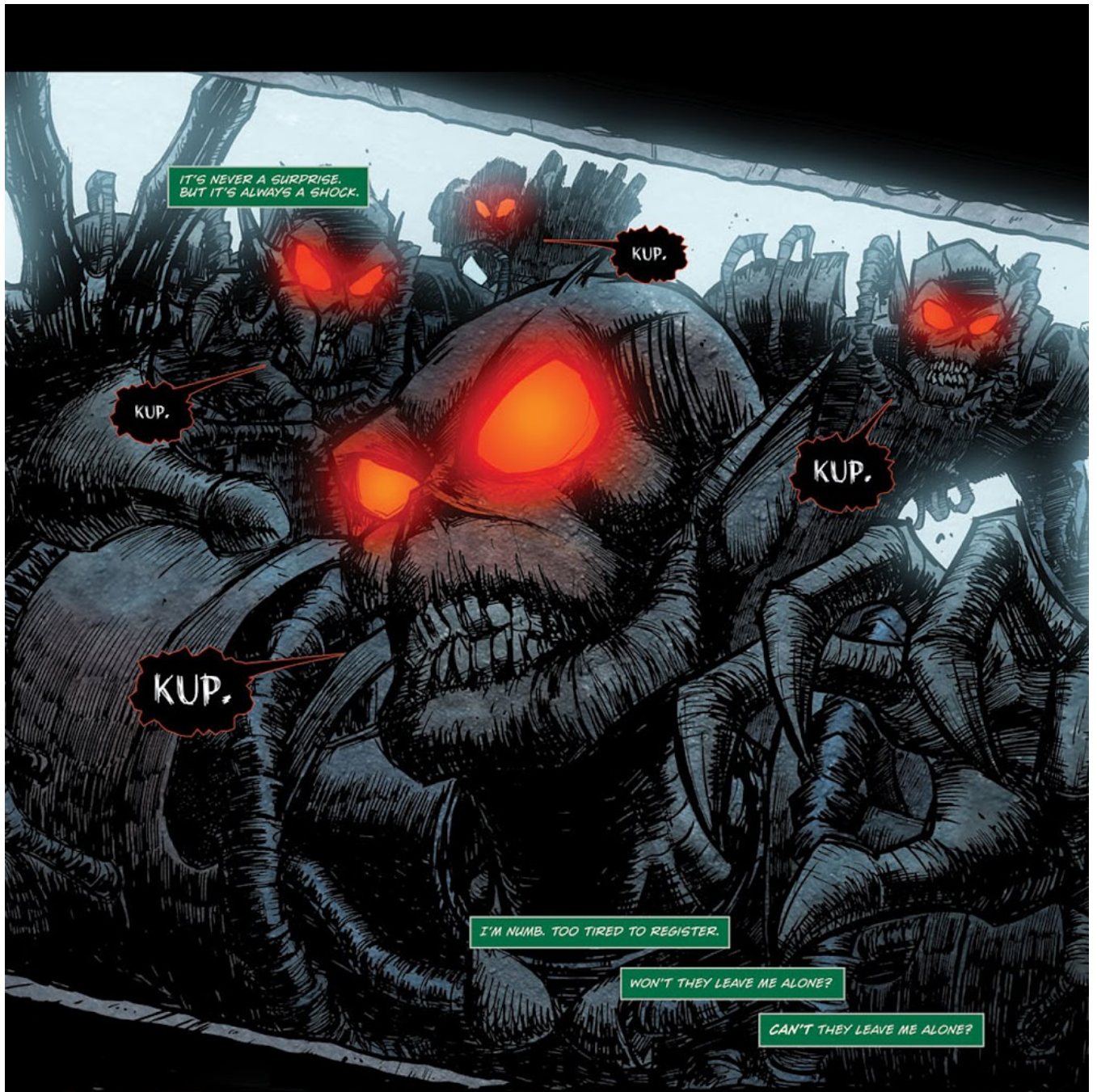
KUP

KUP.

KUP.

...BUT THESE...

...THESE ARE ALL TOO REAL.



IT'S NEVER A SURPRISE.
BUT IT'S ALWAYS A SHOCK.

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

I'M NUMB. TOO TIRED TO REGISTER.

WON'T THEY LEAVE ME ALONE?

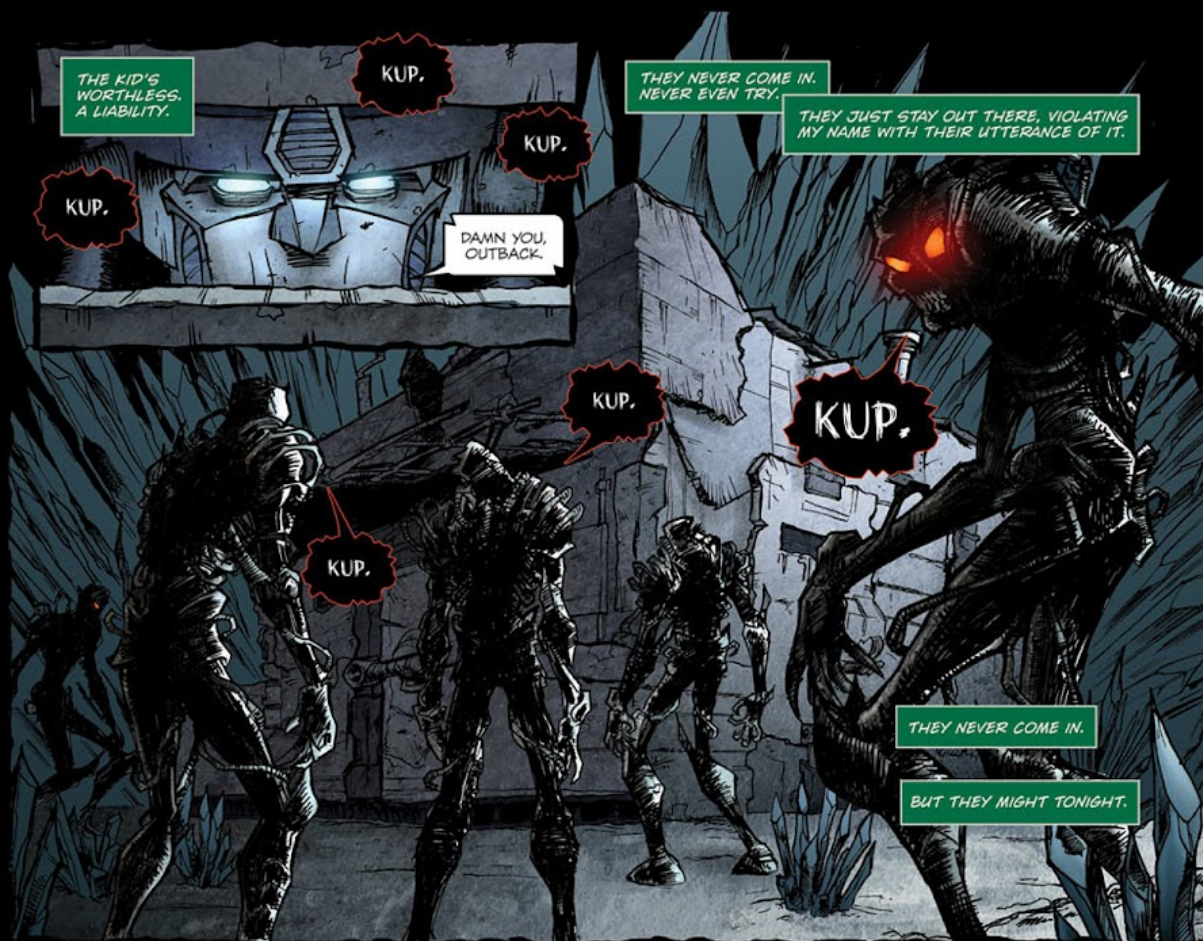
CAN'T THEY LEAVE ME ALONE?

NEED TO GET SHARP, QUICK.

IT'S JUST SO DAMN
HARD TO FOCUS...

OUT...
OUTBACK! DO
SOMETHING!

WHY WON'T
YOU DO
SOMETHING?!



THE KID'S WORTHLESS. A LIABILITY.

KUP.

THEY NEVER COME IN. NEVER EVEN TRY.

THEY JUST STAY OUT THERE, VIOLATING MY NAME WITH THEIR UTTERANCE OF IT.

KUP.

DAMN YOU, OUTBACK.

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

THEY NEVER COME IN.

BUT THEY MIGHT TONIGHT.



KUP.

BASIC INSTINCT SAYS GUN. GET GUN. USE GUN. BUT I KNOW THE DAMAGE A STRAY SHOT COULD CAUSE TO MY CRYSTALS. I CAN'T RISK NEVER HEARING THE MUSIC AGAIN.

KUP.

KUP.

PLEASE... GO AWAY...



AGE, TIREDNESS, FEAR, FATIGUE. THEIR CLAWS'RE SHARPER THAN THOSE OF MY TORMENTORS.

KUP.

KUP.

KUP.

...GO AWAY...

SO TIRED.

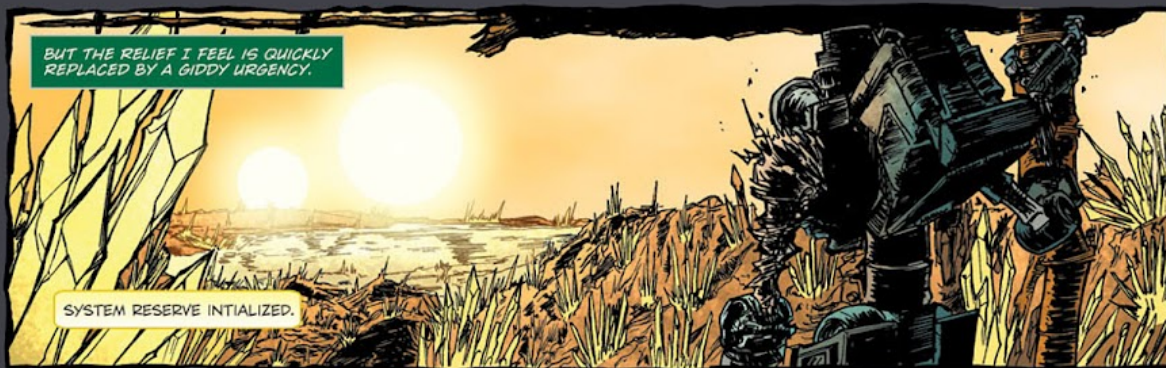
GO...

...AWAY!

THOK

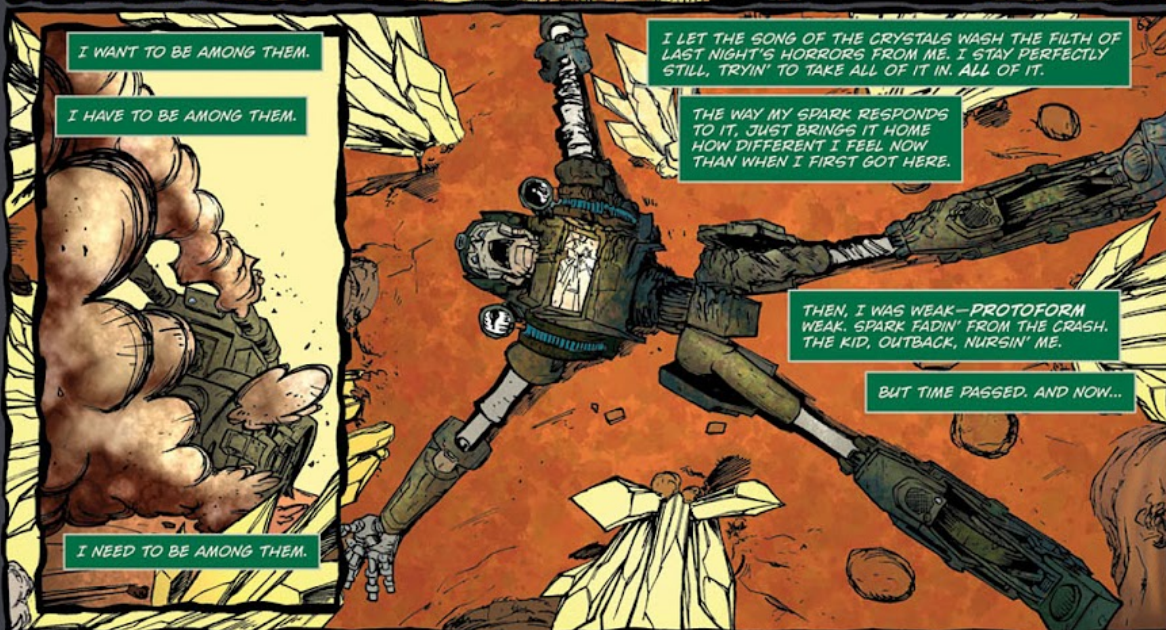
I HATE THEM.





BUT THE RELIEF I FEEL IS QUICKLY REPLACED BY A GIDDY URGENCY.

SYSTEM RESERVE INITIALIZED.



I WANT TO BE AMONG THEM.

I HAVE TO BE AMONG THEM.

I NEED TO BE AMONG THEM.

I LET THE SONG OF THE CRYSTALS WASH THE FILTH OF LAST NIGHT'S HORRORS FROM ME. I STAY PERFECTLY STILL, TRYIN' TO TAKE ALL OF IT IN. ALL OF IT.

THE WAY MY SPARK RESPONDS TO IT, JUST BRINGS IT HOME HOW DIFFERENT I FEEL NOW THAN WHEN I FIRST GOT HERE.

THEN, I WAS WEAK—PROTOFORM WEAK. SPARK FADIN' FROM THE CRASH. THE KID, OUTBACK, NURSIN' ME.

BUT TIME PASSED. AND NOW...



...NOW I'M AWARE OF EVERY PULSIN' ATOM OF MY ANCIENT SPARK. EVERY FIBRILLATING SURGE SENDS ME SOMEPLACE BETWEEN BEIN' SHARP AND VITAL, AND BEIN' WASHED OVER WITH BLISS.

I'D DO ANYTHING TO FEEL LIKE THIS ALL THE TIME. ANYTHING.



SUNS IN THE SKY. SONG THROUGH MY SOUL. BUT WHAT CAN AN OLD MECH DO TO KEEP THE SUN FROM SETTING? TELL ME.

TELL ME.



I WON'T LET THEM TAKE THIS AWAY FROM ME.



DAY.

THEN NIGHT.

EASY TO REMEMBER, EVEN FOR ME.



SOON, KUP,
SOON...

GO AWAY.

WE'LL
BE THERE
SOON...

AND SO IT BEGINS AGAIN.



I PROMISE
YOU THAT...

KUP.

EVEN AS A
GHOST, HE'S
TRUE TO HIS
WORD.



DAMMIT. OLD FOOL.
FORGOT TO SECURE
ALL THE SHUTTERS.

DON'T YOU
EVEN WANT
TO HELP?

DON'T YOU
EVEN CARE?



DON'T YOU
LOVE THE MUSIC
ENOUGH TO
FIGHT FOR IT?

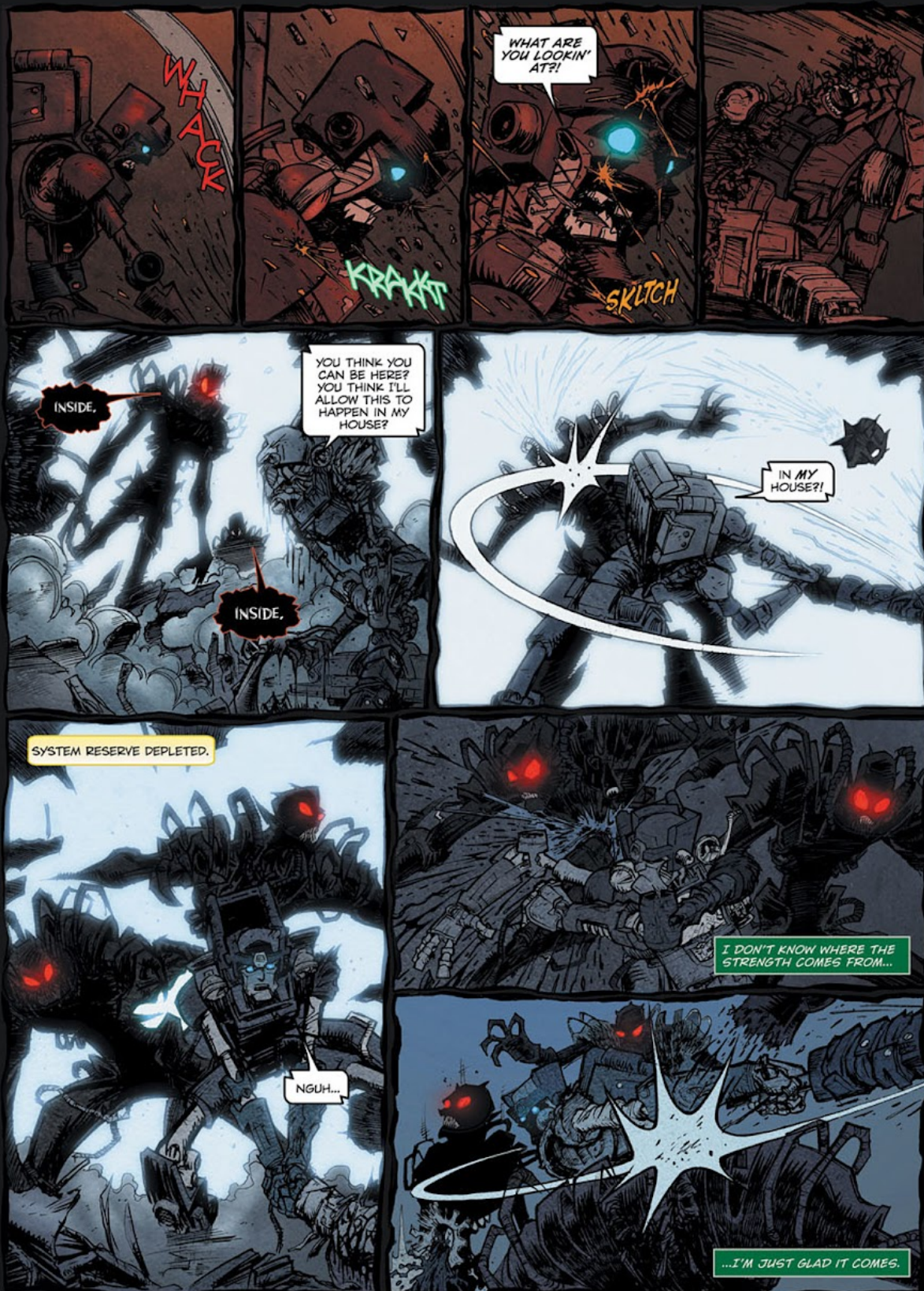
NO?



WELL I DO...



...I DO!





MY SPARK LURCHES AND FLICKERS. THIS CAN'T GO ON...



GAH—



AAAAHHHHH!!

BACK.

SPARKCORE MELTDOWN.

SPARKCORE MELTDOWN.



INITIALIZING EMERGENCY SPARKCORE STABILIZERS.

HHHH... NOW... YOU KNOW...

...WHAT IT'S LIKE...



...TO STARE STRAIGHT INTO ANOTHER BOT'S HEART!



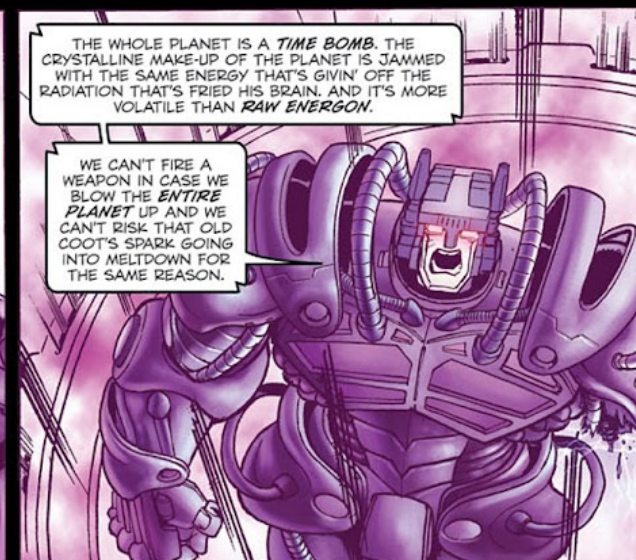
ORBITAL JUMP ACTIVATED.



WELL?



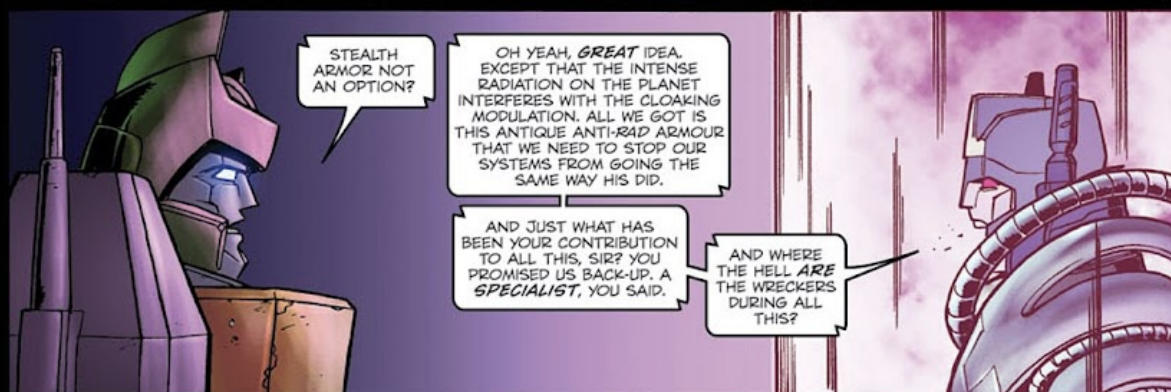
WELL?





WE TRY WAITING TILL HE'S OFFLINE TO GO GET HIM, BUT HIS PROXIMITY SENSORS TELL HIM WE'RE THERE. HIS LOOSE WIRING TELLS HIM WE'RE A THREAT SO HE REACHES INTO HIS RESERVES, AND IT ALL *KICKS OFF*.

THERE SHOULDN'T *BE* ANY FIGHT LEFT IN 'IM. HE HASN'T RECHARGED IN WHO-KNOWS-HOW-LONG, BUT JUST NOW, I WATCHED MY TEAM *DIE* AS HIS NOCTURNAL ENERGY READINGS *SOARED* TO DAYTIME LEVELS.



STEALTH ARMOR NOT AN OPTION?

OH YEAH, *GREAT* IDEA. EXCEPT THAT THE INTENSE RADIATION ON THE PLANET INTERFERES WITH THE CLOAKING MODULATION. ALL WE GOT IS THIS ANTIQUE ANTI-RAD ARMOUR THAT WE NEED TO STOP OUR SYSTEMS FROM GOING THE SAME WAY HIS DID.

AND JUST WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO ALL THIS, SIR? YOU PROMISED US BACK-UP. A *SPECIALIST*, YOU SAID.

AND WHERE THE HELL *ARE* THE WRECKERS DURING ALL THIS?



THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GALAXY, PROTECTING 'BOTS LIKE YOU FROM THE *REAL* BIG BAD.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH KUP VIA A HACKED SIGNAL TO OUTBACK'S HOLO-EMITTER BUT I'VE GOT NO IDEA WHETHER *THAT'S* WORKED.

AS FOR THE *SPECIALIST*... HE'S ON HIS WAY.

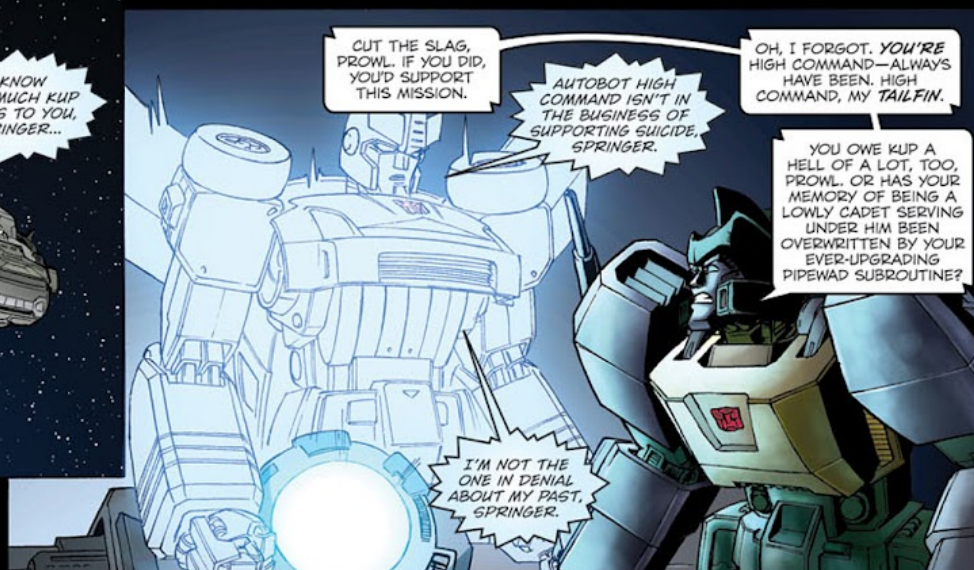
THIS BETTER BE WORTH IT TO SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE. 'COS FACING DEATH AT THE HANDS OF A FELLOW AUTOBOT? AT *HIS* HANDS, OF ALL MECHS?

NO 'BOT DESERVES THAT, SPRINGER...

...NO 'BOT.



I KNOW
HOW MUCH KUP
MEANS TO YOU,
SPRINGER...



CUT THE SLAG,
PROWL. IF YOU DID,
YOU'D SUPPORT
THIS MISSION.

AUTOBOT HIGH
COMMAND ISN'T IN
THE BUSINESS OF
SUPPORTING SUICIDE,
SPRINGER.

OH, I FORGOT. *YOU'RE*
HIGH COMMAND—ALWAYS
HAVE BEEN. HIGH
COMMAND, MY *TAIL FIN*.

YOU OWE KUP A
HELL OF A LOT, TOO,
PROWL. OR HAS YOUR
MEMORY OF BEING A
LOWLY CADET SERVING
UNDER HIM BEEN
OVERWRITTEN BY YOUR
EVER-UPGRADING
PIPEWAD SUBROUTINE?

I'M NOT THE
ONE IN DENIAL
ABOUT MY PAST,
SPRINGER.

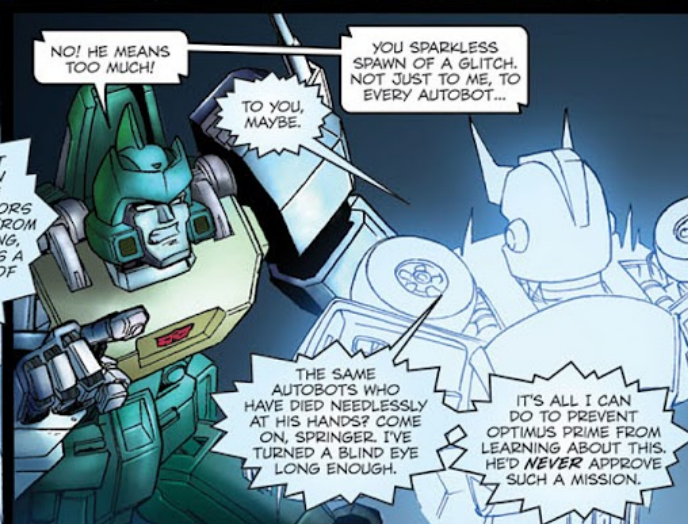


THAT...
THAT'S NOT
THE ISSUE
HERE...

CORRECT.
THE ISSUE IS THIS
CEASELESS FOLLY YOU
LABEL A RESCUE
MISSION.

WHY ARE
YOU SO HELLBENT
ON RETRIEVING AN
AUTOBOT WHOSE
CEREBRAL PROCESSORS
HAVE ROTTED AWAY FROM
RADIATION POISONING,
AND WHOSE BODY IS A
SHAMBLING RELIC OF
UNREPAIRABLE,
INCOMPATIBLE
JUNK?

HE'S LIVED
HIS LIFE,
SPRINGER. LET
HIM GO.



NO! HE MEANS
TOO MUCH!

TO YOU,
MAYBE.

YOU SPARKLESS
SPAWN OF A GLITCH.
NOT JUST TO ME, TO
EVERY AUTOBOT...

THE SAME
AUTOBOTS WHO
HAVE DIED NEEDLESSLY
AT HIS HANDS? COME
ON, SPRINGER. I'VE
TURNED A BLIND EYE
LONG ENOUGH.

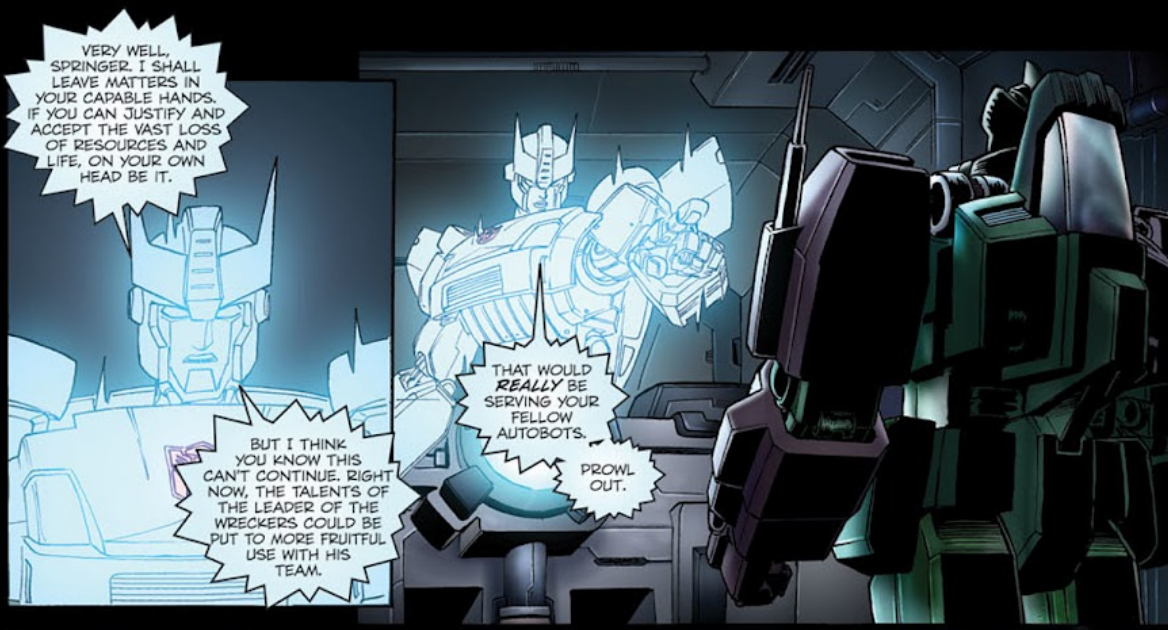
IT'S ALL I CAN
DO TO PREVENT
OPTIMUS PRIME FROM
LEARNING ABOUT THIS.
HE'D *NEVER* APPROVE
SUCH A MISSION.



IF YOU BELIEVED THAT
FOR A NANO-SECOND,
PROWL, YOU'D HAVE
SQUEALED ALREADY.

BUT WE BOTH KNOW
THAT IF YOU DID THAT,
HE'D BE ON THAT
PLANET RIGHT NOW
WITHOUT A PLATE OF
ANTI-RAD ARMOR
ON HIM, DOING
EVERYTHING TO BRING
KUP HOME. RIGHT?

RIGHT?



VERY WELL, SPRINGER. I SHALL LEAVE MATTERS IN YOUR CAPABLE HANDS. IF YOU CAN JUSTIFY AND ACCEPT THE VAST LOSS OF RESOURCES AND LIFE, ON YOUR OWN HEAD BE IT.

BUT I THINK YOU KNOW THIS CAN'T CONTINUE. RIGHT NOW, THE TALENTS OF THE LEADER OF THE WRECKERS COULD BE PUT TO MORE FRUITFUL USE WITH HIS TEAM.

THAT WOULD **REALLY** BE SERVING YOUR FELLOW AUTOBOTS.

PROWL OUT.



SPRINGER, I'M AFRAID PROWL'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCENARIO IS CORRECT.

LOOK, I KNOW, ALRIGHT? BUT IT'S NOT JUST ME THAT KUP'S TRAINED UP, THERE'S SIDESWIPE AND SUNSTREAKER, HOT ROD... PRIME HIMSELF, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!

THIS IS FOR **THEM**, TOO. WE, **THE AUTOBOTS**, WE OWE IT TO HIM.



I UNDERSTAND, SPRINGER. BUT PERHAPS WHAT YOU OWE TO KUP IS TO STAY TRUE TO THE IDEALS AND VALUES HE IMPARTED TO YOU ALL.

A DOGGED BELIEF IN NEVER GIVING UP MAY BE A VIRTUE HE EXTOLLED, BUT AT THE COST OF YOUR COMRADES' LIVES? WHAT WOULD **HE** THINK OF ALL THIS?

I—

SPRINGER!

HM?



HE'S **HERE**, SPRINGER. HIS SHIP DOCKED A DEMI-CYCLE AGO.

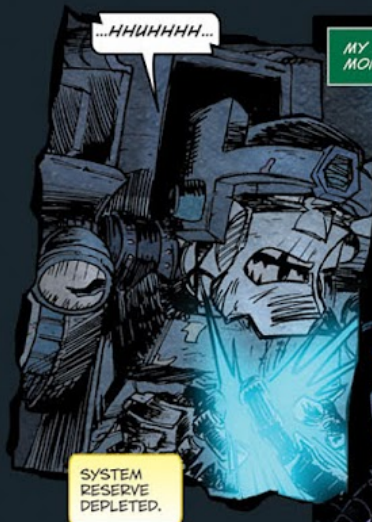
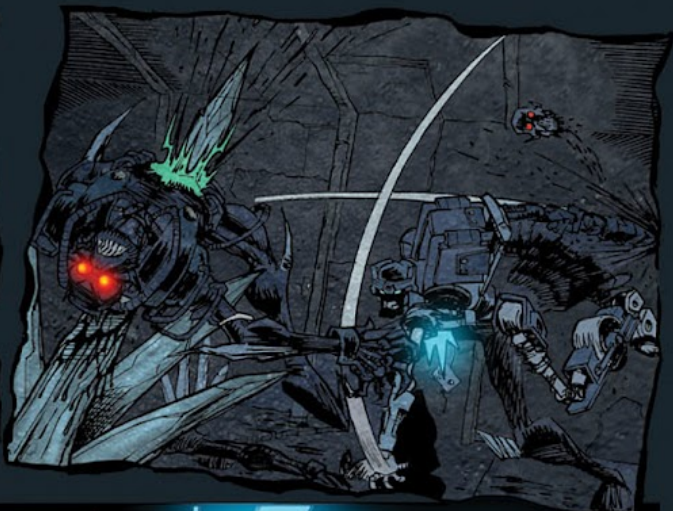
YES! YESS!

WHAT? WHAT IS IT?



BACK-UP.





...HHHHHHH...

MY SPARK IS PURE, AND THESE MONSTERS HATE ME FOR IT.

I YEARN FOR THE SUN'S RAYS...

...BUT IT'D BE NO USE. I'LL HEAR THEIR SONG NO MORE.

NUGH—NO...

SYSTEM RESERVE DEPLETED.

SPARKCORE MELTDOWN IMMINENT.



INITIALIZING EMERGENCY SPARKCORE STABILIZERS.

CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE.



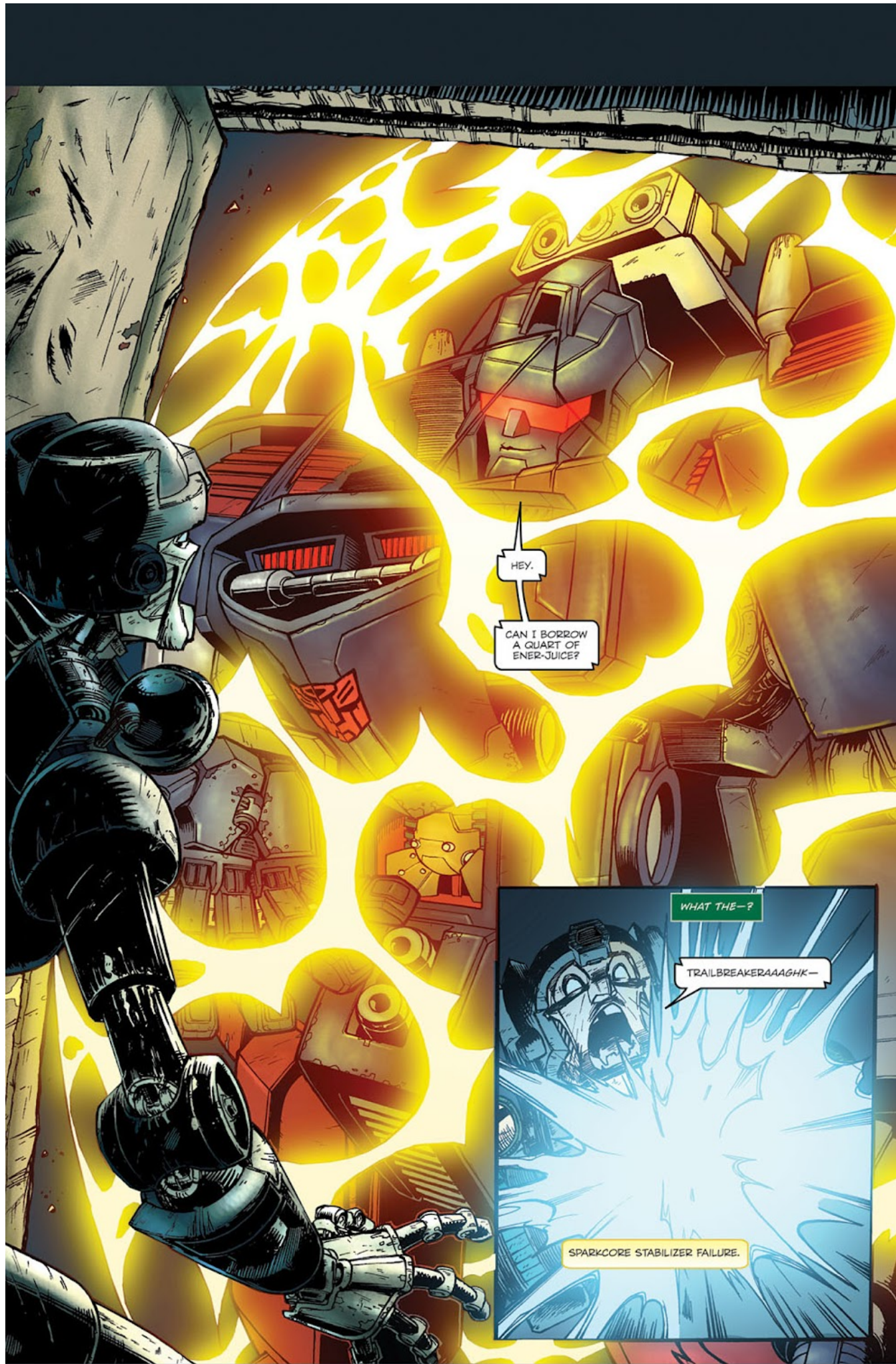
THE LIGHT INSIDE ME SCARES THEM. GOOD.

WHILE THEY COWER, I MAKE GOOD MY ESCAPE.



SCREW IT. IF I'M TO BE DRIVEN OUT...

...IT'LL BE THROUGH MY OWN FRONT...



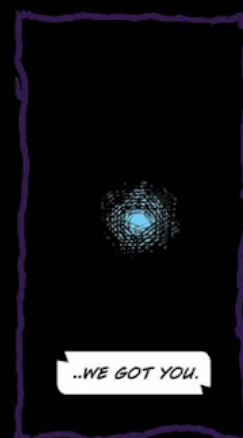
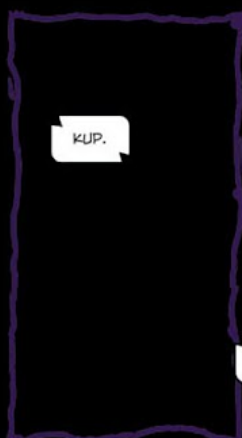
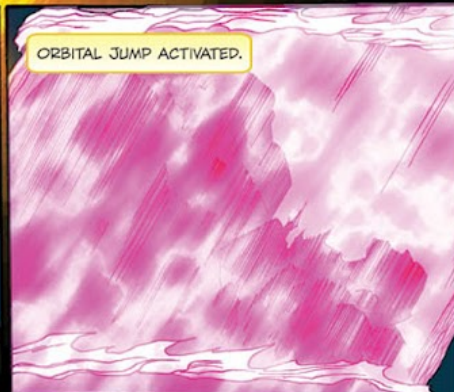
HEY.

CAN I BORROW
A QUART OF
ENER-JUICE?

WHAT THE--?

TRAILBREAKERAAAAGHK--

SPARKCORE STABILIZER FAILURE.



ARK-17

...IT WAS ACTUALLY RATHER STRAIGHTFORWARD—EXTEND A LOCALIZED FIELD AROUND HIS CRASHING SPARK... NO DEAD KUP, NO PLANET-WIDE CHAIN REACTION.

I GUESS IT SOUNDS EASY WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...

WELL, I OWE YOU, TRAILBREAKER, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE THAT COULDA DONE IT. JUST WISH I'D WAITED FOR YOU TO BE FREE FROM YOUR DUTIES *BEFORE* I PUSHED FOR THIS MISSION TO GO AHEAD.

SPRINGER...

IDIOT. LETTING MY FEELINGS GET IN THE WAY.

HE'S THE ONLY AUTOBOT I'D DO THIS FOR, LAY IT ALL ON THE LINE, JUST TO GO *SOME* WAY TO REPAYING HIM.

AND HIS CURRENT CONDITION?

WELL, HE'S BEEN FITTED WITH A PLACEHOLDER POWERCORE, JUST TO MAINTAIN HIS SPARK.

BUT WITH HIS CONSIDERABLE *AGE* AND HIS STUBBORNNESS TO UPGRADE OVER THE YEARS, MOST OF HIS MECHANISMS ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH MODERN TRANSFORMER TECH.

AND HIS MIND?

THAT MAY NEVER HEAL.

LOOK, I'M NOT JUDGING, SPRINGER.

NO, BUT EVERYONE ELSE WILL. AND SO WILL HISTORY, I GUESS. AND WHAT WOULD *HE* THINK IF HE KNEW WHAT I SANCTIONED JUST TO GET HIM BACK, IN *THIS* STATE?

LOOK AT HIM. TRAPPED—MIND, BODY AND SOUL...

"...WAS IT WORTH IT?"

THE END?